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ANCIENT MACEDONIA

THE GAUL IN MACEDONIAN ARMY



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The intention of this essay is to provide simple and easy to understand retrospective of periods from ancient Macedonian history and culture. It avoids substantial and detailed explanations that consider wider historical background of the events and persons described below, and is written primarily for those approaching the topic for the first time.

It also avoids complex explanatory comments or insightful footnotes on the citations from the sources. The explanatory notes are prevalently etymological.

The time-frame of this essay ranges from the 2nd millennium BCE until the death of the last Macedonian ruler of Egypt, Kleopatra VII, in 30 BCE. The interpretations given here are meant to enhance our understanding and appreciation of a kingdom that was a superpower of the ancient world. They are focused mainly on the Macedonian aspect of the story disregarding the wider historical or socio-political perspective.

All the dates and references to centuries are „BCE“ except where indicated otherwise. Throughout this essay, Macedonia/Macedonians refer to the area of the mainland north of Mount Olym. Macedonian peninsula refers to so-called '*Balkans*.'

Latinized/Anglicized or Macedonic names are given in parenthesis, some names and technical terms are transliterated and these will be obvious when they appear. The terminology and concepts that are more recent inventions (like '*Celtic*' or '*Hellenistic*') are largely ignored, if not altogether avoided. Such empirically wrong terms used by modern historiography were unknown to the ancient world and their continued use perpetuates misleading assumptions.

The modern-historiography 'privileged moments' are largely avoided too. For historians today one such a privileged moment (of places and monuments as '*classical*') is '*Classical Athens*', the Athens of the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. But when and why is so regarded? Was '*Classical Athens*' regarded as '*Classical*' already in antiquity? By whom?

The definitions, current meanings and related concepts of the words in English are taken from the Oxford American Dictionary and Thesaurus (Mac OSX version 1.0.2 for PowerPC) and/or Meriam-Webster online dictionary. For the words in Macedonian is used the online ENCYCLOPÆDIA MACEDONICA / MAKEDONSKA ENCIKLOPEDIJA vol. 1 & 2, and idividi.com online Macedonian dictionary.

The sources are listed in the References at the end of this essay.

THE GAUL

The name *Gaul*¹ denotes the ancient populations that once covered vast spaces of Central, Eastern and Western Europe, as well as central part of Asia Minor. Even if some modern scholars connect their upstart with the later so-called *Magdalenian* and/or *La Tène Culture* from the Bronze Age (5th to 1st centuries BCE) the actual beginnings of their culture and their ancestral homeland are in the Neolithic northern regions of the Macedonian peninsula and lower Danube. They were the collateral product of the great 'highways' of Old Europe – the northern riversides, central Europe plains and estuaries, ambients which served as the melting pot and conveyer lines for the migrations from the Paleolithic until today.

The Gaul's comprised of many different and independent tribes, and different sources named them with different names: Iliri (eng. *Illyrians*), Tribali, Skiti (eng. *Scythians*), Kelti (eng. *Celts*), etc. Certainly they never called themselves like this and they never had any collective name whatsoever for themselves. But they were seen by the external conquerors as a cluster of peoples with similar cultural background, which is in part true – their neighboring tribes were very much alike. Although, as they distanced themselves from each other – like the Gaulic (eng. *Gallic*; from lat. *Gallicus*) tribes, lets say, in France and Lower Danube – their cultural and linguistic differences grew exponentially as well.

They were named "Gaul" [gōl] by the Macedonians, because of their tradition to fight half-naked or naked, i.e. 'gol' [plural gōli] – 'naked' in plain Macedonian. This term was later adopted by the Romans² and through Latin transcription slightly modified into "*Galli*" (lat. *Gallicus*, *Gallus*) and much later modified in '*Celts*' (from a common origin with the name Gal/Gaul) or 'Celtiberians', but they were also called by other generic names as '*Triballi*', '*Iliri*' (eng. *Illyrians*)³ or '*Skiti*' (eng. *Scythians*)⁴.

¹ from the Macedonic noun /gol/ – naked (eng. *Galli*; lat. *Gallicus*), because of the famous Gaul tradition to fight naked.

² For example the Gauls south of the Alps were called *Cisalpine Gaul* and those north of the Alps *Transalpine Gaul* by the Romans (definition from Oxford '*Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*').

³ The label *Illyrian* was yet another one imposed by foreigners. This and other foreign-coined names are due to the territorial division and more or less improvised nomenclature of different Roman provinces. The Illyrians certainly never collectively called themselves Illyrians, as they never had any collective name for themselves. The province of *Illiricum* was called like that because of the inhabitants that worshiped the Sun-god, which in their local dialects was called „*Il*“ (*Ile*, *Ilij*), thus they were called *Illyrians* by the Romans. North of them were the *Panonii* (*Panonians*), the worshipers of the more or less same deity (lat. *Sol Invictus** cult), which in their local dialects was called „*Pa*“– the *upper deity*, *its-highness* or *supreme*; a term also preserved as „*Pan*“– a minor deity of flocks and herds; or '*Pan*' – *highness / lord* in Polish, and '*Ban*'- with same meaning in Croatian (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ban_of_Croatia); and as a title is still present in the nomination of the head of Roman-catholic church: '*Papa*' (eng. *Pope*) – *highness-highness*.*

* The "Invincible Sun" [archaic], a continuous Sun-cult from the "earliest history" (as depicted by the Roman sources), used as an universal Sun-power epithet for several gods and demi-gods: Elagabalus (Persian), Apolo, Alexander the Great, Silenus, Mars, etc.; adopted as "*Sol Invictus*" by the Romans. Later adopted by the Christianity too.

** The double-epithet nomination is another archaic characteristic of the Macedonian language, found in all the pharaoh decrees in Macedonic script (so-called "*Demotic*"), from Egypt ruled by Ptolemies, as well as in the current title of the head of Macedonic church which is 'Gospodin-Gospodin' – *Sire-Sire*.



Actually, these were the peripheral populations that bordered or were englobed by the big European emPyres, (Macedonian, Roman, Carolingian, etc.). Populations that were *indianized*⁵ by improper Latin names in the same fashion as the later coined adjectives 'Byzantine', 'Hellenic', 'Slavic', 'Indo-European' (or in fact 'Indian' for the 'Indians' of

⁴ From the Macedonic verb /skita/ - wanders, 'stray'; *Skiti* – wanderers.

⁵ A term coined by the author; describing all the *latinized*, *anglicized* and similar *-ized* minorities or peoples that were renamed by foreigners.

America, that weren't at all "*the Indians from India*" as firstly thought), etc. - meant to account for the politically-distorted European history.

No clear ethnic division can be drawn between all these populations and tribes. Some of their most renowned tribes that remained recorded by the ancient sources were the *Alani*, *Alamanni*, *Bastarnae*, *Bulini*, *Dači*, *Gepidi*, *Getti/Gothi*, *Greutungi*, *Herulii*, *Iliri*, *Itimari*, *Nori*, *Rugi*, *Sarmati*, *Sciri*, *Scordisci*, *Taulanti*, *Tervingi*, etc. They dwelled north of Danube, in what is today Hungary and Romania (ex-*Wallachia*), Austria, Bohemia, Slovakia and Slovenia (ex-*Great Moravia* and *Carantania*), and further to the Central-European plains. It appears from the ancient sources taken as a whole that Gaul tribes sporadically moved en masse, most frequently after having been displaced by the aggressions and migrations of other Gaulic or non-Gaulic invaders.



Left: **Gaul horseman, 2-1 c. BCE**

The early history of the Gaul is predominantly a work of archaeology and the relationships between their material culture, comparative linguistics and genetic researches (the study of which, in recent years, has been aided through the field of archaeogenetics). Little is known about them or their way of living, their language, or religion in prehistory. An occasional warlord might have gained power over few tribes, but the names of Gaul chieftains/kings that make it to be noted by ancient sources are rare, and no dynasty developed the more permanent political institutions needed to sustain the transition from tribal power to that of statehood. Nevertheless, recent archaeological discoveries of their material culture bring us more and more evidence that can pour some light on their history.

Across Europe they intermingled or were politically-swapped with the *Veneti*, *Vendel/Vandals*, *Skiti*, *Tribali* and *Thracians* to the southeast⁶, and were later

⁶ The repopulation of Macedonia with Thracians, Gauls, and Illyrians from the north was recorded by the ancient sources during the rule of the Macedonian king Persej (lat. *Perseus*) between 179 and 173 BCE.

recognized with even more generic and meaningless name as „*Celts*“⁷. Much later part of them became known as „*Goths*“/„*Ostrogoths*“ or „*Visigoths*“⁸, and they were later swapped once again into „*Germans*“ (lat. '*Germanus*'). And again –current „*German*“ populations (English, French, Germans, etc.) never identified themselves or had anything in common with this name, nor they ever had any collective name for themselves whatsoever. All these Latin-bogus terms were used to re-designate „*related peoples of central and northern Europe*“.⁹

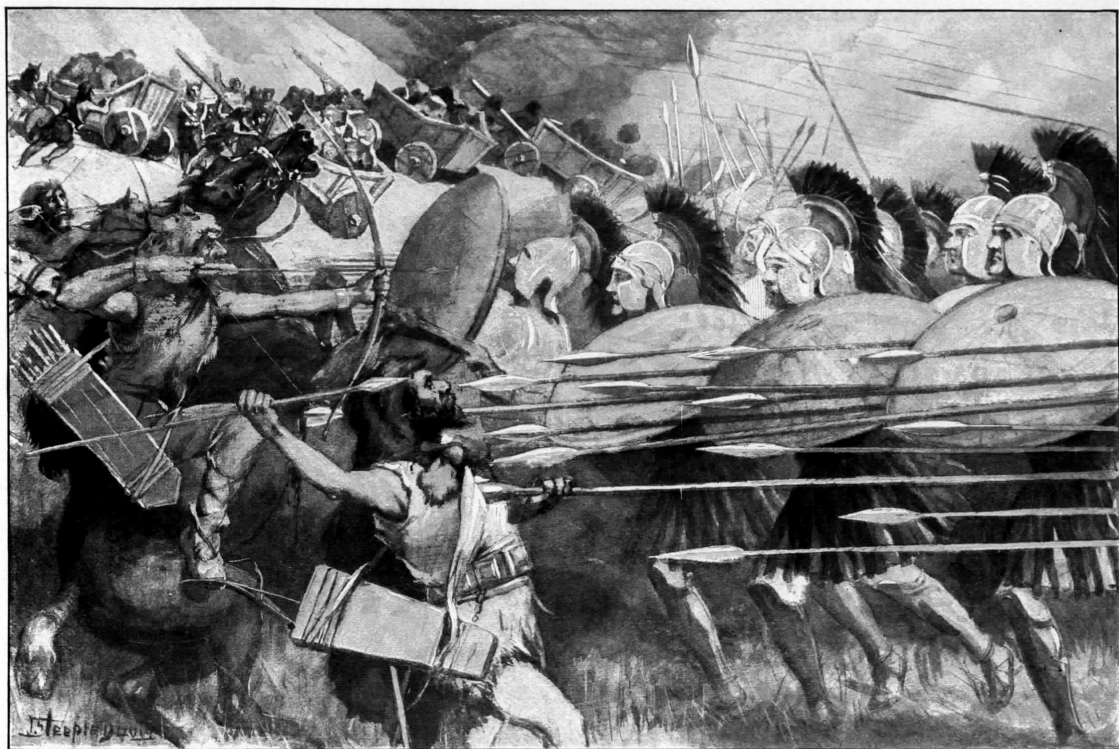
⁷ From Latin *Celtae* (plural), in later use from French *Celte* '*Breton*' (taken as representing the ancient Gauls; a definition from Oxford '*Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*'); it is actually the name „*Celt*“ [kelt;selt] which is one and the same with „*Gaul*“, as derived from a common origin with the names in *Gal*-, only differently interpreted by different sources.

⁸ Probably another derivative of the Macedonic noun "*Gaul*"; further subdivided by geographic prefixes in *Eastern*, i.e. „*Ostrogoths*“, and *Western*, i.e. „*Visigoths*“ (definition from Oxford '*Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*').

⁹ Definition from Oxford '*Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*.' – Legitimate question arises – If all these different names (*Gaul/Celts*, *Veneti*, *Vendel/Vandals*, *Illyrians*, *Skitii*, *Tribali*, *Goths*, *Germans*, etc.) designate the same thing, i.e. „*related peoples of central, eastern, western, south, southeastern and northern Europe*“, why so much different names? – There are 2 simple reasons: first – *Divide to rule!* The kingdoms and emPyres fuel the discordances between the oppressed people in order to facilitate their rule. To do that they must divide the masses with privileged and pejorative names, religion, borders, economically, etc. And second: *The king is dead, long live the king!* In other words – every new upstart kingdom, monarchy or emPyre tend to cancel the previous (kingdom's) history and legitimacy in order to put theirs as the principle. In known European history, all in all, there are 3 great shifts. First one occurred when the first great European emPyre, the Macedonian (1200-148 BCE) was replaced by the Roman (509BCE-AD395); than the Holy German/Roman emPyre (in AD 800) replaced the Western chunk of the old Roman emPyre; and finally the Russian emPyre succeeded the Eastern Roman or *Romeian* emPyre (in AD 1510) after the fall of *Constantinopolitana Nova Roma* (eng. *Constantinople*).

THE GAUL IN MACEDONIA

In the ancient times the Gauls were present in Macedonian peninsula (i.e. *Balkans*) north and south of Danube from where they frequently raided the northern regions in Upper Macedonia. But as from 358 BCE, when Filip II of Macedon fought them back in few occasions during his campaigns, and especially after their encounter with his son Alexander Falanka's (lat. *Phalanx*) in 335 BCE, when he defeated them so heavily and chased them incessantly in several successive battles¹⁰, they panically crossed en-mass on the other (northern) side of Danube and remained there for the time being. And as long as the Argeads stayed on the throne of Macedonia, they remained there and didn't dare to cross that boundary, until they weren't sure that the unity and military force of Macedon was long gone. Pushed northward by Macedon, they propagated from the northern regions of Macedonian peninsula toward Central European plains, gradually penetrating as far as today France, Iberia (Spain) and Anglia (the British islands).



THE MACEDONIAN PHALANX—BATTLE OF THE CARTS

Above: **The famous Battle of the Carts** caried on Šipka Pass, at Hema (lat. *Haemus*) Mountain¹¹, where Alexander III of Macedon defeated the united Gaul Triballians and chased them as far north as across the Danube.

The Macedonian Army was the first fully-professional army, under arms virtually all the time. The economic security generated by Filip II of Macedon during his imperial expansion allowed him to develop new military corps: archers, skirmishers, communication units, engineers, etc. This exponential enlargement of the Macedonian Army could've hardly be entirely fulfilled by Macedonian soldiers only. That's why the lack of organic for the accompanying units was tapped by ally/tributaries and by

¹⁰ The Battle of the Carts, the Battle at Lyginus (today's Isker), etc.

¹¹ More recent names: „Old Mountain“ (mkd. 'Stara Planina' until 19th century), and with the last 20th century-modern name: „Balkan Mountains“.

employment of foreign mercenaries. This ‘job-opportunity’ was very appealing for the most of the Gaul tribesmen, who lived in relatively poor lands, where they eked out their respective livelihoods, adventuring themselves into predatory actions when opportunities arose. Their overall poverty was probably the main reason why they fought naked or half-naked, as the sophisticated well-crafted armaments and weapons were expensive then as they are now.

The basic unit of Gaulic society was the clan. Each clan had a council of elders, and initially a king. In the clan the executive held the title of *Verhogobrat*¹² (lat. *Vergobrat*) a position much like a king, but with powers controlled by rules of the council of elders. Gaul as a whole were politically divided, there being virtually no unity among the various clans. Only particularly difficult times, such as the Roman invasions, could’ve unite the Gaul under a single leader, like *Verhcingetorix*¹³. What is known of their customs is that these chieftains were priests at the same time, following the Theocratic hierarchy and Shamanic traditions of their clan-tribal social structures known throughout all the Gaul/Celtic-Illyrian-Venetic-Etruscan world. This is probably one of the reasons of the Gaul compatibility within the Macedonian Army, where the role of



the king as intermediary chief between the gods and the Macedonians reflected that of the Gaul *Verhogobrat*.¹⁴ The Gaulic druid-chieftains were clearly distinguished by their famous priestly-helmets which are found with the same distinguished shape and frequency throughout all the Apenninic and Macedonic peninsulas and the rest of their European urheimat. They were the guardians and bearers of the secrets of their order, and held sway over the people of Gaul. The nearly complete and mysterious disappearance of the Gaulic languages can be attributed to the fact that Gaulic druids refused to allow the Gaulic oral literature or traditional wisdom to be committed to the written letter. Nevertheless, in their magic rituals Gaul used an undeciphered syllabic script, today known as *Runic, Etruscan, Dashes & Slashes* lore, etc.

Above: **Gaulic bronze priestly helmet of the so-called ‘Etruscan’ type**

The Gaulic burials such as those at lake Ohrid (lat. *Lychnidos*) provided us with valuable archaeological evidence of the Gaul warriors that held high positions in

¹² *Verhogobrat* – ‘higher-brother’; from ‘*verh(o)*’ – top, peak (in Serbocroatian: ‘*vrh*’; in modern Macedonian: ‘*vrv*’); ‘-*gō*’ – belonging suffix (‘*of*’ archaic; example: ‘*Svyatogo*’ – *of the holy*); and ‘*brat*’ – brother. Other examples of usage: rus. ‘*Verhovnii*’ – supreme, top-craftsman (creator); ‘*Vrh*’ – mountain peak; ‘*Vrhnje*’ – the cream on the top of the milk.

¹³ Here again we can note the prefix ‘*Verh*’ - top, as the *Verh-Cingetorix* (mkd./lat. *Top-boar-chest*, a „Chuck Norris“ of the Gaul) was appointed the Top-commander of the Gaulic armies against Rome; the wild boar was widespread military-tribal insignia used as a token by numerous Gaul tribes.

¹⁴ In ancient Macedonia the king was not only the head of the army and of the state, but also the chief priest of the kingdom, a semi-god comparable to the Egyptian pharaoh.

the Macedonian Army during that period, becoming an intrinsic part of the military and social structure of the Macedonian state. It also appears that as a result of this mercenary activity Gaulic groups were also granted land in Macedonia, in payment for their services. Livy (45: 30) tells us of Gaul-Illyrian enclaves (lat. *sclavinia*) in Macedonia itself, specifically around the towns of Voden (lat. *Edessa*), Ber and Macedonian capital Bela (lat. *Pella*)¹⁵ – „*tertia regio nobilis urbes Edessam et Beroeam et Pellam habet et Uettiorum bellicosam gentem, incolas quoque permultos Gallos et Illyrios, inpigros cultores*“. Their movements across Macedonia and wider Europe region give us a glimpse of their nomadic way of living, somewhat like Gypsies of antiquity.



Above: **Artistic illustration of the Gaul "Hairwrapped" warriors after battle. The second from the left on his head wears the classical bronze "Priest-helmet", commonly used as the ceremonial crown in the Theocratic rituals and Shamanic traditions practiced throughout the whole Gaulic-Illyrian-Venetic-Etruscan urheimat.**

Although the first Gaul engagement in Macedonia is recorded in 367 BCE, when Dionys of Syracuse took a band of them into his service and sent them to the aid of the Macedonians against Thebes (Justin. 20: 5,6; Diod. 15:70,1), it is not until their expansion at the beginning of the 3rd century BCE that Gaul mercenary forces became an important political and military factor in the ancient Macedonic world. In 280 BCE, following the general weakening of the state of Macedon due to Macedonian Wars of Succession, the northern regions of Macedonia suffered a widespread rebellion which

¹⁵ Voicing Assimilation. The /b/ and /p/ are identical in pronunciation (both are bilabial stops), differing only in their Voice-parameter; /b/ is Voiced, while /p/ is Voiceless (example: describe/description). In Russian, for example, it's Regressive Assimilation - the Voice parameter of the final consonant in a cluster becomes the parameter of the whole cluster. So the Russian preposition в (v), meaning 'in', is pronounced /f/ when its object starts with a voiceless consonant (example: v'hotele). In German is the opposite: "Volkswagen" is pronounced /folksvagen/.

soon reached the south of Macedonian peninsula as well. This full-scale insurge was triggered by the Gaul/Illyrian raids on Macedonia and Thrace. The first warnings of the gathering storm arrived at the Macedonian court in the form of ambassadors from the neighboring Dardanii tribe who reported a massive Gaul army approaching from the north. To make a point on the gravity of the situation the Dardanians offered to the Macedonian king 20,000 warriors to help the Macedonians against the Gaul advance. But the Macedonian king Ptolem II Keran (lat. *Ptolemy Ceraunus*) laughed the ambassadors, boasting that as successors of Filip II and Alexander, the Macedonians who „*had been victorious throughout the world*“ (Justinus 24: 4) required no help from ‘barbarians’. Opportunist as he was, by refusing to come to the aid of the Dardanii, Keran hoped to ‘kill two birds with one stone’, presuming that the resulting battle between the Dardanii and the Gauls would weaken both to such an extent that neither would subsequently present a threat to Macedonia. But as we know – the presumption is mother of all mistakes. If Ptolem Keran considered carefully the odds, he might have seen that the force of 20,000 offered by the Dardanii was by any means a truly large army, and the fact that they knew that this would not be enough to stop the Gaulic advance without Macedonian help illustrates that the advancing army of Gauls massively outnumbered them. In any way Macedonian king Ptolem made the first of many fatal miscalculations...

Wisely, the Dardanii did not try to stop the Gauls. Instead many joined them, and as they advanced on Macedonia, the Gaul army of roughly 50-60,000 was now reinforced by 10,000 Dardanians.

Then new ambassadors arrived at the Macedonian court, this time from the Gaul leader, *Bolg* (lat. *Bolgius*).¹⁶ Again, Ptolem arrogantly send word to the Gauls that if they laid down their weapons and surrendered their leaders, he would spare their lives. „*The deputies bringing back this answer, the Gauls laughed, and exclaimed throughout their camp, that he would soon see whether they had offered peace from regard for themselves or for him.*“ (Justinus 24: 5).

As they advanced south the Gauls were joined by large numbers of warriors from the surrounding tribes, particularly the Dardanii, the Thracian *Denteletii* and the Illyrian tribe *Autariatii*. The Macedonian general Kassander previously positioned some 20,000

¹⁶ The commander of the western Gaul army in Macedonia in Roman sources is referred to as *Bolgius*, but also as *Belgio/Belgios* – „*Galli duce Belgios*“ (Just. xxiv, 5; cf. Pomp. Prol. xxiv – ‘*Belgios leader of the Gauls*’). The manipulative intention of the Roman historiographers from the later period to ‘shift the cards on the table’ by giving different ‘*western-european*’ appearance of the pre-roman Gaul presence in Balkans, or to link their leader’s name with supposed „*Belgian* tribes*“ (and their supposed migration to Balkan) it’s very obvious but fallacious. The Roman sources always tend to distort the perspective of the surrounding populations. The overall migrations of the populations in that time were almost exclusively toward north, since the ever growing pressure and danger from the Macedon and later Roman invasions that were pushing in every direction from the Mediterranean. This northward migration of the Gaul tribes, like the *Bastarnae* or *Dacians* (in *Deutschland* and *Dutch*, i.e. Holand) from Sub-Carpathian-Danube basin, are well known, and these migrations were toward north and unidirectional, at least until the fall of the Roman power in the 3rd/4th century AD, when sources recorded their backward movements, but under their altered name „*Celts*“.

* From Latin '*Belgae*' – Gaul people north of Seine and Marne rivers (definition from Oxford '*Thesaurus of English Words and Phrases*')

of the Autariatii auxiliary forces from Macedonian Army in the Orbelos area (today Greece/Bulgar border) in order to establish a buffer zone by protecting Macedonia from northeastern expansion (Diodorus Siculus *Bibliotheca historica* 20: 19.1). However, as the Gauls advanced, instead of defending Macedonia's borders against the Gaul, the Autariatii joined them too. Soon it became clear that many of the Macedonia subjects saw the arrival of the Gauls as an opportunity to finally free themselves from centuries of Macedonian dominance.



GAULS & ELEPHANTS

The inevitable battle between the *Bolgius*' Gauls and Macedonians took place a few days after the 'negotiations' had broken down. The Macedonian army was the unchallenged military superpower in the region during this period, and past Macedonian victories had instilled in the ancient world in general, and on Ptolem Keraon in particular, a belief in the invincibility of Macedonian military against the armies of 'inferior' cultures, which is clearly reflected in Ptolem's attitude to both the Dardanii and Gaulic ambassadors.

The Macedonian armies of the so-called *Diadochi* period¹⁷ were equipped and fought mainly in the same fashion as Alexander's, and the famous Macedonian falanka was still the main component, much like in the earlier days. This compact impenetrable military body was created by Alexander I of Macedon and perfected by Filip II of Macedon, but its robust formation in the same time was its greatest disadvantage. It took a superb command as that of Filip II and Alexander III of Macedon and years of disciplined practicing and military planning in order to manage and make an advantage of the condensed brutal force of this neatly packed formation. Thus far the self-assured Ptolem II Keran had in front only the other contenders on the Macedonian throne, and as long as both armies were playing by the same frontal rules this inflexibility in the Macedonian military tactics was not apparent. But now, faced with an army which outnumbered Macedonian in great numbers and which didn't play by the rules of Macedonic warfare, and having in mind that he wasn't by far the king of Filip II or Alexander's caliber – the game was about to change. What followed was, according to ancient sources, a full-scale slaughter (Polybius 9.35'4; Diodorus Siculus 22.3'1-2; Memnon 8'8; Plutarch Pyrrh. 22'2; Pausanias 1.16'2; Just. 24. 3'10). Keran's battle strategy was built around the use of battle elephants, apparently believing that these beasts would terrify the barbarians. In fact, it appears that the opposite was true. The Macedonian ranks quickly collapsed in the face of the massive Gaulic onslaught, and adding to the bloody chaos were the battle elephants which escaped out of control. During this dire defeat the Macedonian king fell off the elephant he was riding, and was captured. His army fled in disarray and, turning their backs on the enemy the Macedonians became easy prey for the advancing Gaulic cavalry. The majority was slaughtered on the battlefield and those that surrendered were rounded up and ritually beheaded. Macedonian king Ptolem II Keran met his fate on a battlefield amid the bodies of his invincible Macedonian army, sacrificed to the gods of Gaul, with his head impaled on a spear.

Gaul/Illyrian invasion was finally stopped by the temporary-appointed king of Macedon, Sostes. In less than 2 years of his reign he managed to withstand the Gaul tide and to defeat them decisively at Delphi in 279 BCE. After this success Sostes self-willingly abdicated from the Macedonian throne. One branch of survived Gauls retreated as far as today's Croatia and settled between the rivers of Sava and Drava, where they transformed later into '*Illyrians*', as designated by the Roman province. Another fraction of the defeated Gaul marauders escaped through Thrace into Asia Minor where they finally met the united Macedonian forces of Antigon Gonat (lat. *Antigonus Gonatus*) and Antioch (lat. *Atiochus*) which defeat them once again in 277 BCE. At the battle of Lysimacheia he destroyed 20.000 Gauls, and was hailed king by the Macedonians.

¹⁷ The Macedonic Wars of Succession. After the death of Alexander III of Macedon in 323 BCE. The Macedonian empire created by Filip II and Alexander was in disarray provoked by inter-dynastic conflicts that raged for more than fifty years.

Following the unexpected mayhem of the Macedonian armies caused by the Gaul forces lead by Bolg in 280 BCE and Bren in 279 BCE, a political and military vacuum had been created in Macedonia, and two main pretenders to the Macedonian throne emerged – Antigon Gonat and Pyr (lat. *Pyrrhus*) from Mollosia. Ironically, in the subsequent power-struggle for control of Macedonia both kings will rely largely on the very people who had shortly before destroyed it – the Gaul. This will add to the overall weakening of the Macedonian emPyre in the Wars of Succession.



After he returned from Asia Minor Antigon Gonat wanted to consolidate the power of Macedonia, weakened by Gaul invasions and his rivals on Macedonian throne, Ptolem II Keran and Pyr the Mollosian. In order to reinforce the army of Macedon he was the first to employ the very same Gaul marauders that he previously fought. The following relationship between Macedonian king and Gaul mercenaries give us a glance on the weakened power of Macedonia at that time. Antigon not only promised the Gaul mercenaries to pay with Macedonian gold, but gave aristocratic hostages as guaranty (Polyaen., Strat., 4: 6,17), and the subsequent payment-episode illustrates the disagreeable nature of Antigon' relationship with them. The Macedonians duly offered to pay each who had 'carried a shield'. The Gaul refused, demanding payment for all of them – the women and children included after which they withdrew and threatened to kill the hostages. At this point Antigon agreed to their terms. But, when the Gauls sent their delegates to receive the payment – they were in turn taken hostage by the Macedonians. This embarrassing episode was eventually solved by the mutual exchange of hostages and Antigon paying his Gaulic mercenaries in full. It was actually the first ever recorded case of successful strike of employees (being they military workers i.e. *contractors* of the Macedonian Army) in their attempt to obtain social benefits from their employer, in this case the Macedonian state. It should also be noted that the description here is of a tribal Gaul units, i.e. whole tribes, including women and children which were moving together with the Gaul mercenaries. This was happening with Gauls not only in Macedonia but also throughout Europe and Asia where they regularly fought in these tribal units. This fact once again denotes their nomadic and opportunistic way of living, which otherwise wasn't the focal point of interest among the ancient historians.



Left: **Roman silver Denar depicting unknown Gaul chieftain. 48 BCE, following the campaigns of Gaius Julius Caesar**

Shortly after these events Antigon' main rival, Pyr, arrived in the region with an army of 8000 strong and 500 horsemen, and promptly hired his own Gaul mercenaries, but it's more likely that they joined him for the promise of plunder. Plutarch states that '*some Gauls joined him*', but he also noted that Pyr had '*no money*' to pay them.

Pyr marched into Macedonia, and allegedly some 2000 Macedonian soldiers and a number of cities joined him. Antigon met him in a narrow pass (the Klisoura Gorge) with an army, but was defeated in battle and put to flight. The outcome of this clash between Pyr and Antigon was actually decided between the Gaul mercenaries because of the unsuitable terrain for the full deployment of the Macedonian falankas, exposing again the obsolete Macedonic way of warring. Having won the battle against the Macedonians and sending his rival to flight, Pyr began to occupy the cities. Securing Egej (lat. *Aegae*), he proceeded to garrison it with his Gaul forces. The lack of control

that he had over his mercenaries was shown by the events which followed. The Gauls who formed the garrison – „*set themselves to digging up the tombs of the kings who had been buried there; the treasure they plundered, the bones they insolently cast to the four winds.*“ (Plutarch Pyrr. 26:6)

The Macedonic Wars of Succession were by no means an exception in terms of Gaulic participation. For example, in 276 BCE four thousand Gaul mercenaries had been taken into service by the Macedonian king of Egypt, „*Brotherloving*“ Ptolem II (lat. *Ptolemy II Philadelphus*). It is ironic to note that these were the same Gauls who had recently defeated and decapitated the king of Macedonia – Ptolem’s own half-brother, Ptolem Keran. After helping Egyptian Ptolem II to a crushing victory over his brother Mag (lat. *Magus*) in a civil war, his Gaulic warriors promptly mutinied and tried to steal Ptolem’s treasures (Callim. Hymn to Delos, 185-8). In the end the Macedonian king besieged them on an island on the river Nile where, rather than surrender, the majority of the Gauls committed ritual suicide (Pausanias op cit.).



Back in Macedonia, until and after the Antigon’ successive final victory over Pyr, the Macedonian army continued to make a use of substantial numbers of Gaulic mercenaries. But the years had not tamed them and they finally mutinied again in Megara in 266 BCE. This time the mutiny was readily suppressed by the reinvigorated power of Macedon – the Gauls were decimated in 265 BCE and they disappear from Macedonia for the time being.

In Asia Minor during the ‘War of the Brothers’ (241-236 BCE) between the Antioch Hierax and his brother Seleuk II Callinik, Antioch’ forces also consisted to a great extent of Gaul mercenaries. His relationship with them is clearly indicated by the events surrounding Antioch’ victory over his brother at the Battle of Ancyra in 235 BCE: „*In the battle that followed Antioch was victor, indeed, through the prowess of the Gauls; but they, thinking that Seleuk had fallen on the field, began to turn their arms against Antioch himself, in the hope of ravaging Asia with greater freedom, if they destroyed the*

whole royal family. Antioch, seeing their design, purchased peace from them, as from robbers, with a sum of money, and formed an alliance with his own mercenaries’.” (Just. 27: 2)

Antioch’ ill-fated relationship with the Gauls was finally terminated when, in 226 BCE, they killed him. (Polybius Historia 74; Trog. Prol. 27). Antioch Hierax was by no means the only Macedonian ruler not to fall at the hands of the Gauls during this period. His father-in-law, King Ziaelas of Bithynia, had also been killed by them two years earlier (Athenaeus, *Deipnosophistae*, 2: 58; Pompeius Trogus, *Prologi*, 27), and his nephew, Seleuk II Keran (lat. *Ceraunus*) was to suffer the same fate shortly afterwards. In 223 BCE Seleuk assembled a great army against Attal I of Pergamon, a campaign which ended prematurely when during the march his Gaulic officers turned on the king, and assassinated him (Polybius IV, 48:8).

Two years later (221 BCE) Seleuk’ successor, Antioch II the Great, marched east to put down a rebellion by two satraps, Molon and Alexander, who had declared independence in Babylon and Persis. The subsequent battle between Antioch and Molon, after the king had crossed the Tigris, once again illustrates the central role played by Gaulic forces in the regions conflicts. Despite the fact that his predecessor had been murdered by them, Antioch’ army consisted, beside the traditional Macedonian falankas, of large numbers of Gaul warriors (Polybius 5: 53, 2-3), while facing him at the ‘Battle of Babylon’ the rebel army also contained large numbers of ‘heavily armed’ Gauls (Polybius 5:53,8).

At the Battle of Raphia in 217 BCE, between Antioch III and Ptolem IV Philopator, Antioch still employed Gauls in leadership positions (Poly. 5: 79), while the pharaoh’s army also contained thousands of Gaul warriors (Polybius 5: 82).



EASTERN PONT/SKITIA

Gaul forces were also a vital military component in the armies of the northeastern Pont/Skitia (lat. *Pontus/Scythia*) regions leaders, as is testified to by extensive archaeological evidence from the territory of today's Ukraine. The earliest depiction of Gaulic oval shields appears in the second to third quarter of the 3rd century BCE, i.e. the period of Gaul migration into the region. It was used, for example, as an emblem on the obverse of bronze coins issued by Leucon II, the king of Bosfor (lat. *Bosphorus*). (Zogroff 1977)

A unique find was made in 1982 at *Nymphaeum*, a wall-painting showing a ship named *Isis* with four Gaulic shields on board, which provides the opportunity to establish the date of the oval shields' appearance in Bosfor to the beginning of the second quarter of the 3rd century BCE (Grach 1984). Starting with the late 3rd - early 2nd century BCE, oval shields are carved on Bosforan grave reliefs, and from the 2nd century BCE onwards a series of terracotta figurines of warriors with the same shields appear (Denisov 1981:91-92). All the known finds of terracotta figurines with oval shields in the Northern Black Sea area are in the Bosforan Kingdom, mainly in the capital, *Panticapaeum* (Eichberg 1987: maps 4-5). Finds of silver umbos for oval shields, also came in excavations of 1983 and 1985 at the sanctuary in *Guržuvskoe Sedlo* in the Crimea, near Yalta.

Further evidence of Gaulic mercenary presence in the armies of the Bosfor Kingdom comes in the form of two late so-called *La Tène* swords discovered in royal burials in the area. The first was discovered in Skitian *Neapolis* in the burial of the king *Skilurus* (late 2nd century BCE), of Crimean Skitia Minor (Zajtsev 2003: 54-55, fig. 76). The sword in the Skilurus burial had been ritually 'killed' according to the well documented Gaulic practice. Another Gaulic sword (LTD1) was found in the mausoleum at *Neapolis*.

In addition, some 20 helmets of the *Montefortino* type, associated with Gaulic mercenary activity, have been found in the *North Pontic* and *Azov* area. While many of such helmets probably penetrated into eastern Europe due to contact with Rome during the 1st century BCE / 1st century AD, earlier examples, such as that from *Bilen'ke*, dated to the 4th / 3rd century BCE, should be attributed to the earliest Gaulic presence in this area. Two Gaulic *Montefortino* type helmets (from *Marivka Domanivskij*, Mikolajivska region and *Vesela Dolina, Bilgorod-Dnistrovskij*, Odesa region) come from votive hoards which also contained Skitian artifacts and Macedonic bronze vessels. The funeral rite exhibited in such complexes originates in the Balkan and Danubian region (Zaycev 2007: 266), and thus these votive hoards should be attributed to the Gaul-Skitian *Bastarnae* tribes, as should the easternmost finds of Gaulic *Novo Mesto* type Gaulic helmets from southern Russia, also found in a mixed Gaul-Skitian context, such as those from *Boiko-Ponura* (Krasnodarsk), and another from *Yashkul* (Kalmikia) which most resembles the *Novo Mesto* type helmets from Slovenia and Croatia.

During the Mithradatic Wars of the 1st century BCE, the Pontic King Mithradat VI the Great had a bittersweet relationship with the Gaulic groups in the region. At the beginning of the conflict the Galatians, like the *Bastarnae* and *Scordisci* in Thrace, supported the Pontic king against Rome and, despite the fact that the Galatians later turned against Mithridat, Gaulic forces remained with the Pontic king until his final defeat in 63 BCE: „*Seeing a certain Bitvit* (lat. *Bituitus*) *there, an officer of the Gauls, he said to him, 'I have profited much from your right arm against my enemies. I shall*

profit from it most of all if you will kill me, and save from the danger of being led in a Roman triumph one who has been an autocrat so many years, the ruler of so great a kingdom, but who is now unable to die by poison because, like a fool, he has fortified himself against the poison of others. Although I have kept watch and ward against all the poisons that one takes with his food, I have not provided against that domestic poison, always the most dangerous to kings, the treachery of army, children, and friends.’ Bitvit, thus appealed to, rendered the king the service that he desired “ (App. Mith. 111; On Bitvit see also Balkan Gauls ‘The Thracian Myth’).



JUST PLAIN MARAUDERS

It showed that employing Gaulic mercenaries was a double edged sword. Indispensable as organic in every great army of the late antiquity, they were totally incompetent to substitute the Macedonic military organization or any other system of centralized administration. They were quick to enter the service of any ruler who could pay them, and fearless in battle, but ultimately, as many kings and generals discovered to their own cost, the Gauls served no masters but themselves.

This schizophrenic-predatory Gaul behavior was emphasized by one particular group who operated in the 2nd half of the 3rd century BCE. Originally 3,000 strong, they apparently had been expelled by their own tribe – a rare ‘honor’ even for a Gaul warriors. They were initially hired by the Carthaginians to protect the town of *Agrigentum* – which they immediately pillaged. They were subsequently dispatched to defend the town of *Eryx*, which was under Roman siege at the time. No sooner had they arrived than the Gauls betrayed the city and ‘*those who were suffering in their company*’, and deserted to the Romans. (Polybius Hist. II, 7)

Welcoming their new allies, the Romans entrusted them with the guardianship of the prestigious temple of *Venus Erycina* – which the Gauls immediately desecrated and plundered. As soon as the conflict with Carthage had ended, Rome took the first opportunity to disarm and banish them from the Apenninic peninsula forever. Shortly afterwards, this same group turns up in the western Macedonia in the service of the city of *Phoenice* in EPyrus. The city was besieged by the Illyrians led by queen Teuta, who had taken over after the death of her husband Plevrat (lat. *Pleuratos*) in 230/229 BCE. When Teuta approached the Gauls who were defending the city, a deal was quickly struck and the Illyrians ‘*landed and captured the town and all its inhabitants by assault with the help from within of the Gauls*’ (loc cit.).

Despite all this, during this period Gaulic warriors were a ‘necessary evil’ for any ruler in the region who had aspirations to power, and they were a vital element in all the major military conflicts from Macedon to Babylon, from the Danube to the Nile – sometimes forming substantial parts of both armies in the battles. This continued right up till the 1st century AD. For example, the Macedonian queen of Egypt, Kleopatra VII, had Gaulic mercenaries in her army too. After her death, 400 of them entered the service of the Jewish king Herod the Great, forming part of Herod’s personal bodyguard, and figuring prominently in his funeral service in 4 BCE. (Josephus. *The Wars of the Jews*. Book 1, 20.3).

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